

Joint Public Oversight Hearing
District of Columbia Transit Development Study
Committee on Public Works and the Environment

Carol Schwartz, Chair

and

Committee on Local and Regional Affairs

David A. Catania, Chair

Council of the District of Columbia



Testimony of Dan Tangherlini

Acting Director
District of Columbia Department of Transportation

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT STUDY

JOINT PUBLIC OVERSIGHT HEARING

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICES
&
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION BY

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SEPTEMBER 18, 2002

Good afternoon chairmen Schwartz and Catania, and members of the Committee on Public Works and the Environment, and the Committee on Public Services. I am Dan Tangherlini, Acting Director of the District Department of Transportation. I am here to present a summary and introduction of the District of Columbia Transit Development Study.

Summary

DDOT and the District Office of Planning have been engaged with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) in a joint study to examine the potential for new transit routes in the District. The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify corridors where transit expansion will be advantageous for residents, employees and visitors in the District of Columbia;

2. To identify potential transit options in appropriate corridors, beginning with light rail transit as the base case for analysis, that will provide improved mobility and circulation within the District; and
3. To identify those corridors, transit options and issues that should proceed to a more detailed level of planning.

Since our previous presentation to the Council in January, we have made progress on a number of issues, including the following:

1. We conducted 5 Community Outreach Meetings to obtain public feedback on the study;
2. We have identified 4 Most Promising Corridors for transit expansion;
3. We have developed a comparison of the effective capacity and cost of construction for alternative transit modes;
4. We have developed an initial estimate of the Economic Return on Investment for the most promising corridors; and
5. We have proposed to begin development of a Starter Rail Transit Expansion Line on the unused CSX railroad branch in Anacostia, linking the Anacostia and Minnesota Avenue Metro stations with the Southwest Waterfront

development area. This Starter Line will reinforce the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, and serve as a springboard for rail transit expansion in other promising corridors.

Introduction

The District of Columbia is expected to grow by 130,000 residents and by 150,000 jobs over the next 25 years. We will not be able to accommodate this growth with existing transit and roadway facilities alone. We will need to introduce intermediate capacity transit modes between existing heavy rail subways and conventional buses in mixed traffic, including light rail or trolleys and rapid buses on exclusive street lanes. Intermediate capacity transit modes will permit more transit service to more neighborhoods, commercial and recreational areas than is possible with our present system.

The city will need to make better use of its existing streets, for automobile and truck movement, buses and light rail or trolleys. We will need to use our existing—and limited—street right-of-way to move more people in fewer vehicles. That is why DDOT has proposed construction of exclusive lanes for buses on K Street, between Mt. Vernon Square and Washington Circle.

Another reason for developing intermediate capacity transit modes is their relatively lower cost and shorter time to implement compared with subway construction. A subway costs from 5 to 10 times more to build than light rail, and

roughly 20 times more than the proposed K Street bus lanes. Given the substantial differences in cost, the city could potentially build two or more light rail lines in the time it would take just to raise the funds necessary to build a single subway route.

Light rail, trolleys and rapid buses on exclusive lanes also provide a different type of transit service than subways. With surface stops more closely spaced than subway stations, light rail or trolleys and exclusive bus lanes provide more local service between more neighborhoods, with shorter walking distances to and from transit stops. Light rail's clearly designated and frequent surface stops also help to focus development and create convenient, efficient neighborhood centers for transit-oriented development.

These and other issues will be developed further in our proposed Alternatives Analysis of the most promising corridors for transit expansion, over the next year.

To make the presentation of our study findings and recommendations to date, I am joined by:

Alex Eckmann, DDOT Mass Transit Administrator; and
Steve Cochran, OP Zoning and Special Project Planner.

Also joining me for questions and discussion are:

John Deatrick, DDOT Deputy Director for Anacostia Waterfront Initiative;
Uwe Brandes, OP Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Project Planner; and
Gregory Walker, WMATA Business and Planning Analyst.

But first I would like to introduce Toni Griffin, Deputy Director for Neighborhood Revitalization at the Office of Planning. Ms. Griffin will say a few words about how the proposals will help reinforce the District's development objectives.